

D.C. 12/22/88

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900e). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Hotel St. Benedict Flats

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**street & number 40, 42, 50 E. Chicago Ave., 801 N. Wabash Ave. not for publicationcity, town Chicago vicinitystate Illinoiscode ILcounty Cookcode 031zip code 60611**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

\_\_\_\_\_ buildings  
 \_\_\_\_\_ sites  
 \_\_\_\_\_ structures  
 \_\_\_\_\_ objects  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
 nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
 In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official  
[Signature]Date  
December 16, 1988State or Federal agency and bureau  
Illinois Historic Preservation AgencyIn my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other. (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ Multiple DwellingCOMMERCE/ TRADE/ Specialty StoreCOMMERCE/ TRADE/ Restaurant**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/ Gothic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONEwalls BRICKSTONE/ Limestoneroof STONE/ Slateother METAL

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Hotel St. Benedict Flats is a free-standing four-story brick and stone structure, designed in the Victorian Gothic style as a 36 unit "French flat" building in 1882-83. With a commanding presence, the building is located at the northeast corner of Chicago Ave. and Wabash Ave. in Chicago, Illinois. Its overall dimensions are 167' on Chicago Ave. X 107' on Wabash Ave. The building is L-shaped, with one entrance on the Wabash Ave. side (801 Wabash Ave.) and three entrances on the Chicago Ave. side (40, 42, and 50 E. Chicago Ave.). It has a slate mansard roof with brown pressed metal trim. At the southwest corner of the structure there is an attached square tower. This portion of the building is not beneath the mansard roof, but rather, its own hipped roof. Rock face ashlar limestone is at the base of the entire building. Limestone is also used extensively throughout the two primary facades with red face brick creating a polychromatic effect. The primary facades have 1-over-1 double hung windows. At the first, second and third levels, they are topped with art glass transoms. The fourth floor has steeply pitched gabled dormers with 1-over-1 double hung windows and no transoms, within the mansard roof. The rear facade of the L-shaped building is brown common brick. Most of the rear windows are 4-over-4 double hung, although there are some narrow 1-over-1 double hung windows in the intersection of the two sides of the L.

The building has good integrity. Its only major alteration was the conversion of the first floor apartments to businesses which caused the loss of some interior features. In addition, there was a simple interior division of the apartments on the second, third, and fourth floors. It appears that these changes occurred early in the building's history.

Today, the Hotel St. Benedict Flats is in a mixed use area. Highrise buildings in the adjacent North Michigan Ave. district are looming over the apartment building which now houses retail businesses in its first floor and basement levels. Just south is the River North District, an area predominated by converted warehouse buildings, many which are now art galleries. Within the neighborhood itself there are a large number of institutional buildings including the Moody Bible Institute, Loyola University, and the Holy Name Cathedral.

The Chicago Ave. facade is nine bays wide. All of the bays except the first bay at the southwest corner of the building are beneath the straight

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

mansard roof. That bay is part of the square tower. At the upper level, the tower has a triple window, divided by pilasters, which is topped with a pediment beneath the hipped roof. All of the other windows on the fourth floor are within gabled dormers projecting from the mansard roof. The ends of the gables and the corners of the projecting sections of the mansard roof are delineated by the pressed metal trim. The trim forms a scrolled cresting next to the dormers. It also edges the pediments, and forms Gothic finials at the points of the pediments. Throughout the facade, the four stories are separated by horizontal limestone string coursing at the sills of the first, second, and third floors, and beneath the cornice. There is an extra line of coursing above the first floor. The two end bays, one beneath the hipped roof at the southwest corner of the building, and the other beneath the mansard roof at the southeast corner of the building both have triangular projecting bay windows. Between the two corner bays, (from west to east) there is a very narrow recessed bay, a square projecting bay, a recessed bay with an entranceway, a square projecting bay at the center of the building, a recessed bay with an entrance, a square projecting bay, and a narrow recessed bay with an entrance.

The Wabash Ave. facade is five bays wide, forming the short end of the L-shaped building. Like the Chicago Ave. facade, all of the bays except one are beneath the mansard roof. Again, that bay is the engaged square tower. Here it houses the chimney and is free of fenestration. Vertical brick and stone detailing delineates the chimney stack. The horizontal limestone string coursing of the Chicago Ave. side extends around the corner and continues the belt around each story of the Wabash Ave. facade. The other architectural details: the window and door treatments, and the pressed metal trim on the mansard roof, are also the same on the two primary facades. The bays on Wabash Ave. project six to eight inches from the wall line. This depth is significantly less than the projection of the bays on the Chicago Ave. side. There is one entrance to the Wabash Ave. facade, and it is located in the third bay.

The Hotel St. Benedict Flats is rich in architectural detail. Much of the detailing is incised or carved in limestone which captures attention because the cream stone elements are set against the red brick. Every window in the primary facades has an incised limestone lintel. Most of the lintels are rectangular; however, some are arched. There are several different designs incised in the lintels without a regular pattern to their placement on the building. Limestone is also the material used as the floor of the small balconies attached to the building's projecting bays. The balcony floors project from the string coursing, and limestone brackets form the bracing. The balcony railings are composed of low iron vertical elements. The balconies over each of the doorways are heavier and more stately. They

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

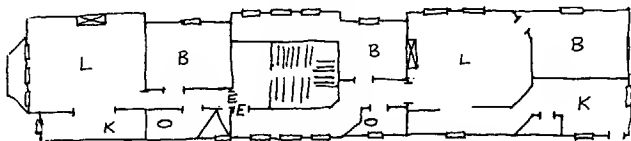
are entirely composed of limestone. Supported by scrolled brackets, the balcony floors form an entablature over each of the four doorways. The face of each entablature has a different horizontal incised design. Within all of the entablatures, and above the brackets, is a carved daisy, one on each side. The cornice within each of the entablatures over the doors has a pattern of carved quatrefoil designs. Below the scrolled brackets are stone foliated capitals capping polished granite columns. The column bases are rounded limestone sitting on carved square posts which begin exactly where the lowest level of string coursing is located on the building.

Certain features in the building's interior contribute to its overall attractiveness. The three stairwells located at the front of the building with Chicago Ave. entrances, and the one stairwell located at the center of the building with the Wabash Ave. entrance are all topped with skylights. The stairwells are square-shaped with curving flights of stairs between each floor. Wooden balustrades and wall trim differ in decorative detailing from one stairwell to another, though foliated patterns predominate. Within some of the first floor spaces and all of the second, and third story apartments there are bright art glass transoms windows. The art glass is colorful and in several patterns, but diamonds punctuated with circles is the central theme.

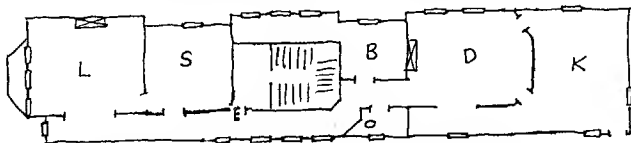
The building has good exterior integrity, though there have been a few changes. The conversion of the first floor apartments to businesses has caused the removal of some of art glass transoms. However, this has not caused noticeable differences to the fenestration because the renters abide by strict signage guidelines. One doorway has been altered slightly to accommodate a basement level business; it seems to be a reversible change. Other than these minor aspects of the lower level conversion of the building to accommodate businesses the building's exterior retains a strong sense of architectural integrity.

The interior also has good integrity. There have been slight modifications. The "railroad flat" floor plan was simply split in half to create additional apartments on the second, third, and fourth floors. This was done without major alterations to the interior of the building, and appears to have been occurred early in its history. The interior division of the apartments is clearly illustrated in the accompanying floor plan sketch. The drawing shows the current configuration of rooms within the two units which now occupy the space, and the original plan as ascertained by an interior site visit. The current apartments each have a living room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom. The original floor plan was composed of the living room, sitting room and long hall in the front, and bathroom, bedroom, dining room, and kitchen in the rear. The first floor apartments have been modified to a greater degree, in order to accommodate commercial uses.

# Hotel St. Benedict Flats



Current Configuration- 1988- 2 units



Probable Configuration- 1883- Single unit

- E = Apartment Entrance
- L = Living room/ parlor
- B = Bedroom
- S = Sitting room
- K = Kitchen
- D = Dining room

- = Bathroom
- ⊠ = Fireplace
- ⊥ ⊥ = Doorway
- |— = Window

This is a sample floor plan  
for an apartment at the  
801 N. Wabash Ave address

**B. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1882-1883  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Architect - Egan, James J. Egan  
Builder - Sexton, Patrick J.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Hotel St. Benedict Flats meets Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is a significant non-institutional building designed in 1882-83 by James J. Egan, an Irish immigrant who is "most noted as an early ecclesiastic architect in the Midwest" (Taussig, 1986). In addition, the Hotel St. Benedict Flats represents an important building type and period in Chicago architecture. It was an early and large example of the "French flat" apartment buildings which were developed during the re-building of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871.

James J. Egan was born in Cork, Ireland in 1839. The son of a prominent builder, Egan received a professional education from Queen's College and the Government School of Design, in Ireland. After his father's death in 1866, Egan left Ireland and immigrated to New York, where he received further architectural training in the offices of James Duckworth and Richard Upjohn. Both firms were prolific in church design. In 1871, Egan moved to Chicago. He had been specifically attracted to the city by the opportunities for re-building caused by the destruction from the fire. As intended, he quickly developed a busy architectural practice designing churches, public buildings, and some residential structures.

Within five years of his arrival in Chicago, Egan was "ranked with Chicago's most distinguished architects; John Van Osdel, W.W. Boyington, and O.L. Wheelock" (Skerrett Testimony, COHAL Public Hearing, October 16, 1986, p. 151). Published in 1876, the Biographical Sketches of Leading Men of Chicago (Upton) asserted that:

"One of the youngest and also one of the ablest architects of Chicago is James J. Egan. Although a resident here for only a half a decade, he has so interwoven the works of his, that were this to be the last year of his resident among us, it would be long before his name would be forgotten. The

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Hotel St. Benedict Flats

---

excellence of the character of the work he has accomplished is in perfect keeping with his own lofty aims."

The prominent architect, Peter B. Wight, agreed. In an obituary for his colleague, he stated that in Egan's work a reputation was established "that has seldom been equalled" (Skerrett Testimony, CHAL Public Hearing, October 16, 1986, p. 152).

Though unusual for a Chicago building of this period, the name of the developer of the Hotel St. Benedict Flats is known. He was Patrick J. Sexton, also an Irish immigrant who settled in Chicago shortly after the fire. Sexton became a successful general contractor. He founded the Chicago Brick Company, and according to his obituary, he was a "pioneer of brick manufacture in Illinois" (Chicago Tribune, Oct. 28, 1903).

The two men worked on several projects together including the City Hall and County Building and Cook County Hospital. Their association was a strong one. In fact, when Sexton died in 1903, he was buried in a mausoleum which was designed by Egan in 1883. The Gothic entrance to the Calvary Cemetery, in Evanston Illinois (the location of Sexton's mausoleum) was also designed by him. When Egan died in 1914, he too was buried in Calvary Cemetery.

The bond between these two men had largely to do with their shared heritage. "The lives and careers of both Patrick J. Sexton and James J. Egan together exemplify one of Chicago's richest ethnic traditions, that of the Irish Catholics" (Taussig, 1986). According to Hollis and Jones, authors of the 1984 book, Ethnic Chicago, Irish immigrants played a substantial role in the history of Chicago:

"Beginning as humble canal diggers and laborers, these sons of the Emerald Isle soon came to dominate the Irish trinity of American urban life; the priesthood, the police, and... politics. Every Chicago Bishop from 1847 to 1916 with one exception was Irish, the police force was disproportionately Irish by the 1890s; and every mayor of Chicago since 1933 with two exceptions has been of Irish heritage... With the language of "perfidious Albion" and a goodly store of native wit, the Irish went on to conquer the American city, introducing and leading their often less fortunate co-religionists from Europe to the American mainstream."

Ellen Skerrett, author of Chicago: a City of Neighborhoods, believes that one of the largest contributions that the Irish made to the development of Chicago

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

was in the re-building of the city after the fire. Skerrett's research indicates that the Irish were predominantly laborers, and that "buildings such as the St. Benedict Flats provided them with opportunities for employment." She adds that, "this did much to raise their own social standing in the city... at the same time, it contributed to the physical development of the city itself" (CCHAL Public Hearing, Oct. 16, 1986, p.146).

Skerrett asserts that Egan and Sexton were among a small number of Irish architects and contractors of the 1880's, a time when the Chicago Irish community totalled approximately 300,000 people. Others of the small group of that period who designed and constructed buildings in Chicago were Charles O'Connor, Frances Agnew and the Hennessy Brothers. Though these few others did exist, it was Egan who was noted for representing "the Irish element." A Chicago Times Newspaper article of March 7, 1875, stated that Egan was "the only Irish architect in Chicago who is pronounced in his adhesion to contractors and builders of his own nationality."

Egan had many commissions in Chicago from the Catholic Archdiocese. During a partnership with Henry W. Hill which lasted from 1876 to 1881, Egan designed St. John's Church and St. Elizabeth's Church (Withey and Withey, 1970). As a sole practitioner between 1881-97, Egan designed St. Vincent de Paul Church (1895-97), and Holy Angels Church (1896-97). In 1897, he established a partnership with Charles H. Prindeville, and the firm of Egan and Prindeville designed: St. Agatha Church (1904-06); St. Bridget Church (1905-06); St. Andrews Church (1912-13); and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church (1913-14) (Lane, 1981). Many of the churches are still standing. Among Egan's most noted secular projects were the 1874 Criminal Court and City Jail (the Criminal Court was replaced in 1892 by the existing building at S4 W. Hubbard), and the City Hall and County Building. "Although these buildings have long since been demolished and replaced, at the time they were obviously conspicuous and important commissions assigned only to an architect of considerable stature" (Taussig, 1986, p. 5). Egan's design work for hotels and/or apartment buildings included the Hotel Ryan in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Spaulding Hotel in Duluth, Minnesota, and the Hotel Brevort and Hotel St. Benedict Flats in Chicago.

The Hotel St. Benedict Flats was never actually a hotel. An Illinois statute passed in 1872 disallowed the formation of corporations with the purpose of buying and improving land. The law prevented builders from enjoying the "limited liability" that would be created through the formation of a corporation. "Crafty Chicagoans circumvented this onerous law by forming corporations for the ostensible purpose of building and running a hotel but in actual practice they operated an apartment building" (Taussig, 1986, p. 5).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

Patrick J. Sexton was such a "crafty Chicagoan." In 1882, he purchased a piece of property on the corner of Cass Street (now Wabash Ave.) and Chicago Avenue. The property had been owned by the Benedictines of St. Vincent Abbey, a Roman Catholic order from Latrobe, Pennsylvania, that came to Chicago in the 1860s at the invitation of Bishop James Duggan to establish a parish of St. Joseph (Taussig, 1986, p. 1). The large brick church which had been erected on the corner of Cass Street and Wabash Ave. burned down during the Chicago Fire. When Sexton developed the property, he retained the religious name which had been associated with the land. As explained in the Chicago Inter Ocean real estate news in a May 20, 1883 article:

"T.J. Kinsella sold the corner of Chicago avenue and Cass street for the Benedictine order to P.J. Sexton, the ground being 180 x 150 feet, and the price paid \$30,000. On this property, Mr. Sexton has already built a most imposing set of flats, to which now has been given the name Hotel St. Benedict in memory of that great saint whose seventh centennial anniversary was celebrated the past year."

"Rather than choose a more secular title to christen his new business enterprise, Mr. Sexton's Irish-Catholic heritage may have led him to preserve the memory of the first occupants of the site and the illustrious founder of their religious order in the name of his new building" (Taussig, 1986, p. 2).

It was opportunity which motivated Sexton to build the Hotel St. Benedict Flats in 1882. For those who had foresight, the period between the Great Fire and the Columbian Exhibition was filled with such opportunity. "The years 1871-1893 were the most crowded and dynamic the city had known" (Pierce, 1957). Besides the individual successes of "crafty Chicagoans" such as Sexton, the city itself was advancing. "During this period Chicago achieved maturity and assumed leadership befitting the second largest city in the country" (Pierce, 1957).

The new urban density created a need for multi-family residential structures. However, before the Chicago Fire, upper and middle class Chicagoans did not live in this manner. In fact, there were definite social biases against apartments. The issue of whether or not apartment living was an acceptable alternative to the detached single-family house became a heated controversy in the late nineteenth century. There were arguments that apartment living would destroy the American home life, and lead to promiscuity and communism. Negative attitudes about apartment living prevailed. "The image, and the reality in congested urban areas such as New York, was that of poverty and overcrowded living conditions-- that of the tenement-- and was in strong contrast to the image of freedom and space offered by the single family

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5 Hotel St. Benedict Flats

house" (Benjamin, 1983). However, with the growing need for housing came a strengthening of arguments in favor of multi-family living. There was increasing "fascination with the possibilities for efficiency, cooperation, and good financial investments" associated with apartments (Wright, 1981, p. 135). "All in all, at least for several decades, the middle-class public was highly ambivalent- suspicious but enthusiastic- about the potential of the apartment building as a means for reorganizing certain aspects of American domesticity" (Wright, 1981, p. 135).

Ultimately, Chicago experienced a "golden age" of flats between the turn-of-the-century and the First World War. By this time apartment living was accepted, and both the upper and middle classes resided in flats. However, during the 1871-1893 period in which flats were first being built in the city, the apartments were specifically designed as luxury housing for Chicago's elite. These early high class apartments were known as "French flats," because the inspiration for them came from France. They were meant to emulate the Parisian apartments in which well-to-do French families had been living for many years. In the article "Flat City" Wim de Wit explains that many of the prominent architects of the day:

"...were attracted to Paris not only by the prestige of France's architecture, but more important by the Ecole des Beaux Arts, which provided a program of theoretical instruction in rules of composition and classical styles that would enable them to work within the French architectural tradition. When they returned to the United States, these students brought back with them the styles and compositional methods they had learned at the Ecole, and a familiarity with building types they had seen in Paris, among which was certainly the apartment building" (1983-84, p. 21).

Richard Morris Hunt, the first American to study at the Ecole de Beaux Arts, was also the first to bring the building type home. He designed America's first luxury apartment building (Stuyvesant Apartments) in New York in 1869.

It did not take long before the development of multi-family housing became a trend in Chicago. By the 1880's the city was witnessing a "flat craze" or "flat fever." In fact, in 1883 alone, 1100 flat buildings were constructed (Taussig, 1986, p. 4). According to the 1891 book, Industrial Chicago:

"The Calumet, Beauvillage, Benton, Cambridge, Charlevicx, Dakota, Hotel de Lincoln, Hotel Rutland, Hotel Vendome, Geneva, Houghton, Ingleside, Ivanhoe, Ivar,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6 Hotel St. Benedict Flats

Kenilworth, LaFayette, LaSalle, Locust, Marquette, Morton, Ontario, Palermo, Prairie, St. Benedict, Seville Victoria, Oakland and Coronado and Romano, all sprung up as if by magic, and a thousand less notable stone-faced, pressed brick structures... appeared throughout the city, taking the place of ancient frame or brick houses or of ruins."

It is obvious that this boom of flat buildings changed the face of Chicago.

The term "French flat" does not refer to a particular style or size of apartment building but instead makes reference to the French origin "evoking a cosmopolitan social life, the glamorous influence of the continent, and the slightly risqué practice of living in close proximity to one's neighbors" (Wright, 1981, p. 136). Like their European antecedents, Chicago "French flats" were generally given prestigious names.

According to Carroll William Westfall, the "French flats" in Chicago were so diverse that a prototype cannot be described (1985). However, the early buildings were generally three to four stories high, and of various sizes, though many of them were eight flats. The floor plan of the early flats were often "railroad" style with a long hall beside rooms lined up in a row, one after another. The major characteristic that the 1871-1893 "French flats" had in common was that they were designed to look like single family houses. "Whatever made a multi-family residence look like a house and a home was stressed, and whatever gave the appearance of pretense and of an apartment building or of a "French flat" was suppressed" (Westfall, 1980). One method of such disguise was to scale the entrances of a building to the individual units rather than the buildings exterior itself. "Entrances in Chicago, no matter the size of the building, always suggest that beyond them is a house not a large building" (Westfall, 1985, p. 33).

Wim de Witt sees this aspect of "French flat" as perhaps its greatest contribution to architectural history:

"Flat buildings were almost ideal: they looked like houses yet they provided the amenities of apartment buildings. In effecting a compromise between the practical advantages of the high-rise apartment building and the emotional attachments associated with a private house, the Chicago architects who designed flat buildings made a special contribution to the development of the apartment into an American building type" (1983-84, p. 26)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 7

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

In designing the Hotel St. Benedict Flats, Egan was certainly placing emphasis upon making the large building look like several separate houses. In its total configuration, the buildings looks like four separate houses standing next to each other. "In Rascher's Insurance Atlas of 1892, the St. Benedict is even drawn and described as four separate party wall structures" (Taussig, 1986, p. 7). Its mansard roof also contributes to its house-like appearance by weighting the top, disguising the uppermost story, and making the structure seem heavier and closer to the ground (Wright, 1981, p. 136).

Even in its own day, the Hotel St. Benedict Flats was seen as an exceptionally large and fine version of the "French flat" type. An 1883 Chicago Inter Ocean article noted:

"Perhaps the largest flat on the North Side is the one rising at the corner of Chicago avenue and Cass street (Wabash Ave.)... There is a high basement of four stories. The material is Bedford stone in the first floor, and the walls are of pressed brick. There are polished granite columns with carved capitals at the entrance; and throughout the building is furnished with the highest order of completeness. The cost will not fall below \$90,000. Sexton et al are owners and builders."

A Chicago Tribune article also dated 1883 seemed equally impressed. It noted that on the lot Sexton had purchased from the Benedictine order, he had built "...a row of exceptionally fine flats containing thirty-six apartments at an outlay of \$90,000."

Stylistically, the building is Victorian Gothic. It was a style particularly favored by the wealthy, in choosing their own homes. This may have been another one of Egan's efforts to give the apartment building the appearance of a mansion. The polychromy and extensive use of architectural detail including the variety of incised lintels, art glass, and the pressed metal trim were all features used in the design of Chicago mansions of the period. In addition, Egan may have consciously selected a style in which he could make a direct reference to French architecture. The building's slate mansard roof with steeply pitched gables which top the dormers, and the projecting balconies are reminiscent of the architectural style developed by Francois Mansart in his seventeenth century plans for the Louvre.

In addition to the building's physical elegance, it was located in a very desirable residential neighborhood. At the time North Michigan Ave. was named Pine Street, "and its environs were conspicuously residential and an enclave

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 8

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

---

for a number of prominent Chicagoans" (Taussig, 1986, p. 3). Among them were: Joseph Medill, Joseph T. Ryerson, and Cyrus McCormick. According to John Orury, author of Old Chicago Houses, Pine Street was to the North Side what Prairie Avenue was to the South Side of Chicago.

The Hotel St. Benedict Flats, now a hundred and six years old, is one of the area's few remaining links with its history as an early fashionable residential neighborhood. In addition, it is one of the last existing "French flat" buildings which was constructed in the 1880s. According to the Chicago Landmarks Commission:

"Only a handful of the early 1880s apartment buildings are still extant in the city, particularly among those built on the Near North and Near South sides... The Chicago Historic Resources Survey did not find any surviving examples of this building type in the 2nd Ward, and in its preliminary survey of the 42nd ward, the survey has found only one building somewhat comparable to the Hotel St. Benedict Flats. This is the four-story Calumet Flats of 1882-83... However, this building does not approach the substantial size or sophistication in concept and design of the Hotel St. Benedict Flats" (Taussig, 1986, p. 7).

The Chicago Landmarks Commission concluded that the Hotel St. Benedict Flats is "the best surviving example of its type" (Taussig, 1986, p.7).

Today, the Hotel St. Benedict Flats is a visual landmark for many who enjoy its low height, red brick, and rich detail in contrast to the stark skyscrapers which loom over it. Others feel that this building no longer fits within the context of its current neighborhood. However, one should remember that as Wim de Wit has stated: "Although Chicago has become famous as the city of the skyscraper, it is actually a flat city" (1983-84, p. 18). The Hotel St. Benedict Flats today is more than a very old building among many newer buildings. It is a symbol, reminding us of a late nineteenth century movement that ultimately influenced the way Chicago would to develop and appear, as well as the way its residents would live.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 2 Hotel St. Benedict Flats

Holli, Melvin G. and Jones, Peter d'A, eds. Ethnic Chicago. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishers. 1984.

Industrial Chicago: The Building Interests. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company. 1891.

Lane, George A., S.J. Chicago Churches and Synagogues: An Architectural Pilgrimage. Chicago: Loyola University Press. 1981.

Michael, Vincent. Interview by the author regarding the description of the building conducted July 15, 1988, and drawing of apartment floor plan.

Pierce, Bessie Louise. A History of Chicago: Volume III, The Rise of a Modern City 1871-1893. Chicago and London: The University Press. 1957.

"Real Estate." Chicago Inter Ocean. January 6, 1883, p. 10.

"Real Estate." Chicago Times. March 7, 1875.

"Real Estate." Chicago Times. May 20, 1883, p. 12.

"Real Estate and Rents." Chicago Inter Ocean. May 20, 1883, p. 6.

Skerrett, Ellen. Testimony Before the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, Thursday, October, 16, 1986. Public Hearing Transcript by Leon M. Golding and Associates, Ltd. in the files of the Chicago Landmarks Commission.

Taussig, Meredith. "Hotel St. Benedict Flats 40-50 East Chicago Ave. Chicago, Illinois." Preliminary Staff Summary of Information. Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, Revised Version, February, 1986.

Upton, George P. Biographical Sketches of Leading Men in Chicago. Chicago: Wilson Pierce. 1876.

Westfall, Carroll William. "The Golden Age of Chicago Apartments." Inland Architect. November, 1980, pp. 18-26.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Home at the Top: Domesticating Chicago's Tall Apartment Buildings." Chicago History Magazine. Spring, 1985, pp. 20-39.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   3  

Hotel St. Benedict Flats

---

Withey, Henry F. A.I.A and Withey, Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc. 1970.

Wright, Gwendolyn. Building the American Dream: A Social History of Housing in America. New York: Pantheon Books. 1981.

Benjamin, Susan. "Suburban Apartment Buildings in Evanston, Illinois,"  
(Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places), 1983.

de Wit, Wm. "Apartment Houses and Bungalows: Building the Flat City."  
Chicago History Magazine. Winter 1983-84, pp. 18-29.

"Death Comes to P.J. Sexton." Chicago Tribune. Oct. 28, 1903, p. 5.

Drury, John. Old Chicago Houses. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 

|      |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6       | 4 | 4 | 8 | 0        | 4 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Zone | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

D 

|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is located on the northeast corner of Chicago Avenue and Wabash Avenue. The boundaries measure 17.7' on Chicago Avenue by 117' on Wabash Avenue. This includes a 5' boundary outside of the exterior walls of the building.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the plot of land historically associated with the building.

See continuation sheet

#### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julia Snideman, Volunteer

organization Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois

street & number 53 W. Jackson Blvd.

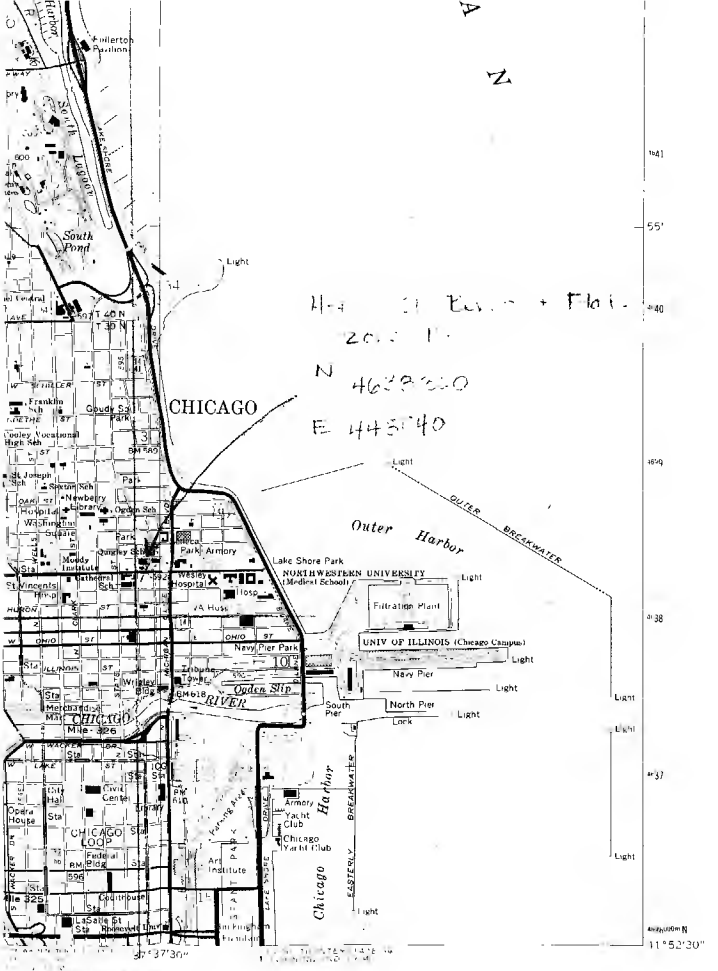
city or town Chicago

date August 30, 1988

telephone (312) 922-1742

state Illinois zip code 60606





11-4 11 East + Flat.  
 2011  
 N 46° 29' 00"  
 E 44° 51' 40"